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OT 720 Psalms

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ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Department of English Bible

OT(IBS)720 3 hours
PSALMS (English Bible)
Prerequisite: NT(IBS) 525 or 530 and OT501

David L. Thompson

Spring 2001

I. GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course seeks to increase the student's mastery of the Psalter and to hone his or her skills in methodical, inductive Bible study, especially observation, interpretation and evaluation. To this end we will survey the entire Psalter, inductively study in some detail examples of each of the major Psalm types and study topics pertinent to the Psalms and their use in the New Testament and the Church.

This orientation implies (1) an emphasis on method and (2) a strong commitment to direct, independent study of the biblical text, with interpretive secondary sources to be critically consulted only after extensive, first-hand study.

The English Bible will serve as the basis for study and class discussion, but students with facility in the biblical languages are expected to make use of them whenever practicable. Consultation of several versions is encouraged.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

- A. **Method.** By the end of the course the student should be able to do the following
1. Observation:
 - a. Survey individual Psalms;
 - b. Observe the details of individual paragraphs and verses;
 - c. Ask the key interpretive questions regarding observations made (See Appendix I);
 2. Interpretation:
 - a. Answer evidentially the most significant questions raised in the observation process;
 - b. Integrate the answers to the questions in a progressive fashion so as to achieve ultimately an understanding of the Psalm and its contribution to the Psalter as a whole;
 3. Evaluation and Application:

Discover the ways in which the passages thus interpreted speak transculturally and relate them to appropriate contemporary settings;
 4. Correlation:

Relate the theology of the Psalms to the teaching of other biblical materials, thus moving toward a biblical theology.
- B. **Content.** The student should be able to:
1. Think through the contents of each Psalm studied in detail without reference to the text/
 2. Identify significant passages in the Psalms and interpret them contextually;
 3. Demonstrate the importance of sound methodology for interpretation of the Psalms and other biblical literature;
 4. Describe thoroughly the meaning and development of major themes in the Psalms;
 5. Discuss the historical and religious background of the Psalms, demonstrating a general knowledge of critical problems regarding the Psalms and an ability to use this data in the interpretation of the Psalter.

- C. **Attitude.** The student should:
1. Appreciate the value of sound methodology for the interpretation of Scripture and desire to employ such method in the study of its entirety;
 2. Desire to make the Psalms a lifelong object of inductive study;
 3. Intend to employ the Psalms in preaching and teaching.

III. TEXTS, READINGS AND RESOURCES

A. Required Texts and Materials

1. New American Standard Bible, Revised Standard Version, or New Revised Standard Version of the Bible or some other modern, standard (non-paraphrasing) version with minimal editorial clutter in the layout.
2. Bible Study That Works. Revised edition. Evangel Press, 1994. David L. Thompson
3. Biblical Resources for Ministry. Revised edition. Evangel Press, 1995. David R. Bauer

B. Collateral Reading

1. Thompson, J.A., "History of Israel," Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, vol. 3, pp. 335-354, especially pp. 343 ff. or some equivalent article of your choice. Copies of the Thompson ZPEB article are on file at the library reserve desk for copying, to reduce wear on the reference volumes. Or the roughly equivalent readings on The History of Israel C. F. Pfeiffer (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, [1982] 2:908-924) or H. H. Rowley (Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, 2:750-765) or entries in The Anchor Bible Dictionary, III:526-576 may be used. See below for required "self-examination" due by February 28(W).
2. Commentaries by James L. Mays, Derek Kidner, Hans-Joachim Kraus, and the three entries in the Word Biblical Commentaries (See bibliography for each.). After you have done your own work on each Psalm selected for study in the lessons, read the treatment of the Psalm found in one of these resources. Include the evidence and insights gained, with documentation, in the "Community of Scholars" objective determinant, along with other interpretive resources.

C. Self-exam on Historical Background

Using the Appendix VI, "History of Israel," as a study guide, and studying Thompson's article in ZPED, or the equivalent readings, the student shall gain sufficient mastery of the historical setting of the psalms and the Psalter to 1) understand the major historical allusions in these poems, and 2) discern possible life situations of the the psalms and the Psalter.

To express this competence the student shall 1) make a rough draft historical chart which includes the major persons and events given in App. VI and 2) invest a least one-half hour in explaining this chart and the history it presents to another person or conferring with another person (perhaps a colleague from this class) intentionally about the finished chart.

Report the person and the date and time of the above presentation, and submit with your chart and Thompson reading report no later than class time, February 28.

If you have previously completed such an assignment for another OT(IBS) course or have taken History of Israel here, do not make a new chart. 1) Review your previous materials or do equivalent investigation in features of historical background of the Psalter which may interest you, 2) write up a brief (note form) report of that work, 3) confer with a colleague in this course as assigned.

D. Extra-credit Research and Bibliographic Review

Satisfactory, timely completion of the following three assignments will raise the student's grade one level (e.g., from B to B+, B+ to A-). Report the completion of these projects with clear bibliography on a "Reading Report" page, and submit with it whatever notes and interaction they generate by).

1. Independent surveys of selected Psalms

We will not study all of the Psalms carefully. From half of the lessons assigned, select an additional one or more Psalms (passages must total at least 20 verses) and conduct a thorough survey. Use Lesson II.1 as guide. Submit study notes a final session.

2. Bibliographic Review of Method Texts.

Invest three hours reading in texts listed in Bibliography A on method in Bible study (excluding MBS, if you have previously read it).

Or, invest three hours reading in John Goldingay's Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament, a work on the problem of "Evaluation," as it is called in MBS.

3. Reading in Approaches to the Psalms and Psalm Study

Invest seven hours reading from the works in Bibliographies B, and particularly C. The sections on the Psalms in Brevard S. Childs' and R. K. Harrison's works are particularly recommended, as is the work of Holladay.

Notes. Take normal survey notes on D1. On D2 and 3 take notes as you deem most helpful for your own learning and files.

Report the completion of this work on a full sheet of paper, no later than the close of the semester, 5:00 p.m., May 18(F).

E. Online Resources

The following (and other) materials will appear in an email (First Class) folder in your campus, First Class, e-mail desk top.

- PowerPoint slides and other documents. Copies of the Power point overheads/slides and other materials we use in class will be lodged here for your review and, if desired, duplication.
- Psalms studies. Some selected studies I have done on Psalter but which we will not use in class may be found here.

WARNING. If you do print Power Point materials BE SURE TO MARK "PURE BLACK & WHITE" IN THE PRINT DIALOGUE BOX in order to avoid pools of ink on your paper or the library floor (It is not a pretty sight.).

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE. Materials we will use in class will in some cases be posted here long before their use in class.

- You should consider these materials secondary sources.
- They should be consulted only after you have done your own work and then only with proper documentation and critical interaction. Undocumented use of these materials will be considered plagiarism. These materials are not a substitute for interaction with regularly published secondary sources.

CAMPUS EMAIL SERVICE. If you have not established you on-campus First Class email service you will need to do that to access these materials (See Kevin Heickes, BC 323). No cost to you for this.

E. Library Reserve Resources.

- Some of materials available digitally and additional materials are available in hard copy in a "PSALMS" box at the library reserve desk.
- Dr. David Bauer's five tapes entitled "Second EB: Abridged Introduction." Not assigned but available for consultation.
- Robert Traina. Methodical Bible Study.

IV. COURSE PROCEDURES

A. Inductive Studies of the Psalms.

The most important part of the course will be the student's own, independent, direct studies of the Psalms, due at class time and on the dates assigned.

A word about “**independent.**” It is understood that these lessons are primarily to be notes of the student's own direct study of the Bible, with reference to secondary sources only as is appropriate--to minimally interpretive works during the course of study and to more interpretive works only after considerable interpretive study of one's own. Then the student will be expected to give evidence of critical interaction with interpretive sources used. When secondary sources are used, clear documentation will appear. This is sufficiently important from methodological and instructional, not to mention moral perspectives that unacknowledged appropriation of significant information and ideas from interpretive or introductory resources will be considered plagiarism. **Plagiarism** will certainly lead to a grade of zero for the lesson involved and may constitute grounds for failure in the course.

Independent here excludes reference to any previous student's work in the course and to lecture notes from any previous semester of OT(IBS)720, except as a documented, secondary source. It is assumed that these notes and all work submitted for this course is the student's own work, done specifically for OT(IBS)720, and not previously submitted as part of any other course's requirements. Exceptions to these procedures, when group study is suggested, will be clearly announced.

Thoroughness, accuracy and the ability to penetrate beyond the superficial understanding of the literature will be sought. See below for criteria of excellence.

Students from cultures where extensive, undocumented use of secondary sources is acceptable should give particular notice to this aspect of North American scholarly expectations to which you will be accountable.

B. Format.

To facilitate handling by SPO personnel and also by my office, the following information will appear in large print, upper right corner, front page:

- 1.SPO number (main info needed by SPO)
- 2.Student's name (please print)
- 3.Lesson numeral and page number (IV-1, IV-2)
- 4.Date due/Date completed, in that order (e.g., Feb 14/ Feb 13)

On succeeding pages you need only put your last name and the lesson-page enumeration. Staple or paper-clip every multi-sheet work submitted.

C. Evaluation and Feedback

1. Lessons. All lessons are due to be submitted, complete at class time as assigned. Selected lessons will be graded for written feedback.
2. Classroom instruction and interaction.
3. Peer consultation. Group work will be encouraged on several lessons to make insights and instruction from colleagues available.

D. Grade Components.

(See Seminarian: The Catalog Edition and no. 3 below for grade values.)

1. Lessons and readings.

Lessons I - V	15%
Lessons VI - IX	25%
Lessons X - XII	25%
Lessons XIII - XVI	35%
2. Grading Criteria and Criteria of Excellence
The stated course objectives and the directions in the appendixes, especially Appendixes I, II and V provide the bases of evaluation. Careful attention should be paid particularly to the appended materials.

3. Assessment Reflected in Grade
(See Seminarian: The Catalogue Edition for grade values.)
A = Exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objectives
B = Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives
C = Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives
D = Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives
F = Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives
4. Class attendance and completion of lessons. See "course requirements" below.
5. Late work. Work submitted late may be accepted for credit but will not be given a letter grade, except in cases of emergency or by special arrangement with the professor.

E. Course Requirements

1. Completion and submission of all assignments and lessons in writing as assigned. At least 70% of the assignments must be completed to earn credit in the course.
2. Punctual attendance at all classes for the entire class, including the final session, May 16. One absence is allowed without penalty. Every day of absence beyond that will cancel credit for one lesson, unless provisions are made for make up work. Plan now to attend the final exam session, which we will use to do important integrative work.
3. Responsible handling of difficulty with class content or requirements, of late work, of absences or other matters related to participation in the class.

E. Criteria for Excellence

In the form of guidance and suggestions, Appendixes I, II and V especially contain specific criteria of excellence by which work in the class will be judged. These should be attended to carefully.

F. Course Requirements

1. Completion and submission of assignments and lessons in writing as assigned. At least 70% of the lessons must be completed to earn credit in the course.
2. Punctual attendance at all classes. Except for emergencies or professional conflict, every three absences beyond three will cancel credit for one lesson (For evening classes, each hour is a "session.") Plan now to attend the last day of class at the time of the scheduled final examination.
3. Responsible handling of difficulty with class content or requirements, of late work, of absences or other matters related to participation in the class.

V. INDUCTIVE STUDIES IN THE PSALTER

LESSONS WILL BE DUE ON A WEEKLY BASIS. THE SPECIFIC PSALM TO BE STUDIED WILL BE ANNOUNCED WELL IN ADVANCE OF DUE DATES.

Suggestions:

1. Read through an entire assignment before beginning it.
2. Recall that items numbered separately are often interrelated and best considered together and done in light of each other.

GROUP ONE: 15%. LESSONS I - V

FEB 14-28 LESSON I. SYLLABUS & FOUNDATIONS

1. Read through the syllabus immediately, establishing the base of your accountability for acquaintance with its contents. Give special attention to Sections I - IV and V and Appendixes I, II and V. DUE FEB 14
2. Read Bible Study That Works, revised edition. Two phase assignment:
 - a. Complete this reading by Wednesday, February 14. DUE FEB 28
 - b. Write a 500 word, typed, critical interaction with the work.
 - If you have already read BSTW2,

- 1) read 90 pages of most interest to you in Robert Traina, Methodical Bible Study, and write the response; **or**
- 2) select another text (or equivalent portion thereof) from Bibliography A to read and review on the same schedule as BSTW.
3. History Self-Exam and Collateral Report Due DUE FEB 28
See instructions in Section III.C above.
4. READ THROUGH THE PSALTER QUICKLY.

LESSON II. PARTIAL SURVEY OF PSALTER AS A WHOLE

BY MARCH 28

Read through the Psalter quickly. Then:

1. Give descriptive (vs. interpretive) titles to each psalm, so as to be able to recall the content of each by its title.
2. Make brief, **preliminary** notes on each psalm regarding
 - a. Psalm type (see syllabus for samples, but do not follow for identification)
 - b. An obvious, significant literary structure
 - c. Obvious data for critical questions
3. In this preliminary reading, do you discern any overall patterns in the editing and arrangement of the Psalter as a whole?

Over the semester we will give repeated consideration to the question of the possible literary structure of the Psalter as a book-as-a-whole.

FEB 14

LESSON III. GENERAL HYMNS OF PRAISE (THE *tešhillaΔh*) (PSS. 67; 68; 75; 103; 113; 115; 117; 134; 146; 147; 149 AND 150)

1. **Survey the psalm designated for class study (_____):**

Either

- a. Identify and name the main units and sub-units of the psalm.
- b. Observe the main structures operating between and through these units, governing the bulk of the psalm. Give enough preliminary; observation of the materials involved in each of these structures that your understanding of the psalm is clear, using your structural observation already as an entry into the analysis of the psalm.

Or

- a'. Identify the main units and sub-units of the psalm, giving descriptive titles to each.
- b'. Analyze the thought-flow of the psalm, making the structure and content of the unit clear.

And then, following either a, b or a', b'

- c. Identify the structure you consider most important to an adequate understanding of the psalm. Address the standard interpretive questions to the materials governed by that structure and to the structure itself. Aim at covering the exegetical concerns (definition, reason, implication) underlying the standard questions, while at the same time adapting the questions to the specific materials at hand.

2. **Interpret:**

- a. Select the most important questions raised (1c) and answer them as thoroughly as time will allow.
- b. Give primary emphasis to contextual analysis.
- c. Include study of a key term (see below).
- c. Separate observations from inferences, using either the two column format (MBS, 135-66; also 166-68) or some other format that achieves the same purpose.
- d. Work through the major interpretive determinants applicable to your question(s), summarizing your results as you go, building a coherent interpretation of the psalm as a whole in the end. Include at least one other major, critical interpreter among your resources.

3. **Evaluation and application.** Select a major truth uncovered and, as time allows, evaluate and apply it.

LESSON IV. HYMNS IN PRAISE OF THE CREATOR (THE *tešhillaΔh*) (PSS. 8; 19; 29; 33; 65; 100; 104; 136; 148)

1. Apply Lesson III to Psalm _____. As you have time consider the questions below.
2. What apologetic issues do you see being addressed in these songs.

[FEB 21] LESSON V. HYMNS OF PRAISE TO KING YAHWEH (THE *teΣhillaΔh*) (PSS. 24; 47; 93; 95; 96; 97; 98; 99; 145)

1. Apply Lesson III to Psalm _____. As you have time consider the questions below.
2. Study the relationship between God's creative work and the other major motifs of these psalms. Why do these themes converge in these poems?
3. What NT reflexes of these motifs do you see?

DT WILL BE IN INDIANA. CLASS RESCHEDULED TO _____.

GROUP TWO: 25%. LESSONS VI - IX

FEB 28 LESSON VI. HYMNS IN PRAISE OF THE LORD OF HISTORY (THE *teΣhillaΔh*) (105; 106; 114; 135; Cf. 78 AND 136).

1. Apply Lesson III to Psalm _____. As you have time consider the questions below.
2. How are the main messages of these psalms brought implicitly or explicitly to bear on the psalmist's or the worshippers' situation.

MAR 07 LESSON VII. GENERAL PRAYER SONGS OF DISTRESS (THE *teΣpuillaΔh*) (16; 28; 36; 77; 82; 123; 125)

1. Apply Lesson III to Psalm _____. As you have time consider the questions below.
- 2.. How does the distress situation addressed in this psalm (and the others in this group) relate to a general readership?

MAR 14 LESSON VIII. PRAYERS FOR DELIVERANCE FROM ACCUSATION AND PERSECUTION (THE *teΣpuillaΔh*) (3; 4; 5; 7; 9; 10; 11; 12; 13; 17; 25; 26; 27; 31; 35; 42; 43; 54; 55; 56; 57; 58; 59; 62; 63; 64; 69; 70; 71; 86; 94; 109; 120; 139; 140; 141; 142; 143).

1. Apply Lesson III to Psalm _____. As you have time consider the questions below.
2. What are the most prominent enemy types confronting the writers of these psalms?
3. What may have been the purposes of including such songs in the liturgy?
4. Quite apart from a role in the "reconstructed liturgy," what role do these psalms play in the Psalter as we now have it?

[MAR 21] LESSON IX. PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE FOR RESTORATION FROM NATIONAL DISTRESS AND DEFEAT (THE *teΣpuillaΔh*) (PSS. 44; 60; 74; 79; 80; 83; 85; 90; 108; 126; 129; 137)

1. Apply Lesson III to Psalm _____. As you have time consider the questions below.
2. What are the main causes for distress confronted in these prayers? How are they affecting the psalmist and what prayers in the main are made concerning these distresses?

DT WILL BE IN INDIANA. CLASS RESCHEDULED TO _____.

GROUP THREE: 25%. LESSONS X - XII

MAR 28 LESSON X. IMPRECATORY PSALMS (THE *teΣpuillaΔh*) (5; 10; 17; 35; 58; 59; 69; 70; 79; 83; 109; 129; 137; 140)

1. Apply Lesson III to Psalm _____. As you have time consider the questions below.
2. Compare the main motifs of these prayers with Matthew 5:43-48, 1 Corinthians 13 and Romans 12:14-21, and evaluate the relationship of these poems to Christian faith and practice.

APR 04 LESSON XI. PRAYER SONG OF THE SINNER (THE *teΣpuillaΔh*) (PSS. 6; 38; 39; 40; 41; 51; 88; 102; 130)

1. Apply Lesson III to Psalm _____. As you have time consider the questions below.

2. Give special attention to the study of the theological assumptions here and to seeing the various facets of the writers' understanding of God.

**READING WEEK AT ATS
APRIL 09-13**

- APR 18 LESSON XII. FESTIVAL SONGS AND LITURGICAL PIECES (THE *s^oiΔn*) (PSS. 50; 81; 115; 121; 131; 133)
1. Apply Lesson III to Psalm _____. As you have time consider the questions below.
 2. What do you learn about Israelite worship and cult practice from these psalms?

GROUP FOUR: 35%. LESSONS XIII - XVI

- APR 25 LESSON XIII. THANKSGIVING SONGS (THE *toΔdaΔh*) (PSS. 18; 22; 23; 30; 32; 52; 66; 92; 107; 116; 118; 124; 138)
1. Apply Lesson III to Psalm _____. As you have time consider the questions below.
 2. What main responses to deliverance appear in these songs? How were these "lived out?"
- MAY 02 LESSON XIV. ROYAL SONGS (THE *ma>aΣsāay leΣmelek*) (PSS. 2; 20; 21; 45; 61; 72; 89; 101; 110; 132; 144)
1. Apply Lesson III to Psalm _____. As you have time consider the questions below.
 2. What theology of kingship surfaces in these songs? What support do you find here for divine kingship in Israel? For royal participation in the temple cult?
 3. What messianic motifs are found here as interpreted by the New Testament?
- MAY 09 LESSON XV. SONGS OF ZION (THE *s^oiΔr sliyyoΔn*) (PSS. 46; 48; 76; 84; 87; 122; CF. 137)
1. Apply Lesson III to Psalm _____. As you have time consider the questions below.
 2. Judging from these songs, how did the city of Zion function in the faith of ancient Israel? What significance for NT faith?
 3. Reflections on the relationship between these songs and the function of Zion and/or Jerusalem in the NT?
- MAY 16 LESSON XVI. DIDACTIC SONGS (THE *h\okmaΔh*) (PSS. 1; 15; 34; 37; 49; 73; 78; 91; 111; 112; 119; 127 AND 128; CF. 19)
1. Read Proverbs 1 and 10 as background for this assignment, noting the major emphases. Review Psalms 1 and 37.
 2. Apply Lesson III to Psalm _____. As you have time consider the questions below.
 3. How do Leviticus 26, Job, Isaiah 53, Mark 8:234 ff., and Romans 8:31-39 relate to the major assumptions undergirding these psalms? Include in your evaluation.

VI. SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

See Section I below for extended bibliographies

A. METHODOLOGY (Including popular presentations^P)

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B. THE PSALMS

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C. APPROACHES TO PSALMS STUDY

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